

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1377

As Reported By House Committee On:
Trade, Economic Development, and Housing

Title: An act relating to timber programs under chapters 314 and 315, Laws of 1991.

Brief Description: Modifying timber recovery programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Basich, Jones, Kessler, Campbell, Sheldon, Morris, Riley, Dunshee, Rayburn, Locke, Quall, Kremen, Zellinsky, H. Myers, King, Wineberry, Roland, Linville, Pruitt, Holm, Springer, Johanson, Finkbeiner and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Trade, Economic Development, and Housing, February 15, 1993, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND HOUSING

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Wineberry, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Forner, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Casada; Conway; Morris; Quall; Schoesler; Sheldon; Springer; Valle; and Wood.

Staff: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Background: Economic assistance is provided to timber communities and the timber industry by coordinating state economic development services in timber communities, by providing technical and other assistance to the timber industry, by increasing financing for economic development-related public infrastructure in timber communities, and by increasing exports from timber communities.

Dislocated timber workers are provided extended unemployment insurance, training and tuition assistance, extension of the Basic Health Plan, mortgage/rental assistance, and social services in timber impacted communities.

The state efforts are coordinated by an Economic Recovery Coordination Board, an Agency Timber Task Force, and a Timber Recovery Coordinator.

Increased financing for public infrastructure in timber communities is provided through the Community Economic Revitalization Board, the Public Works Trust Fund, and the Development Loan Fund. A separate account under the Community Economic Revitalization Board finances economic development-related infrastructure in timber communities without requiring that the loan or grant be tied to a specific business. The Public Works Trust Fund can be used for new public infrastructure in timber communities. Timber communities are added as a priority for the Development Loan Fund.

The Economic Recovery Coordination Board, the Agency Timber Task Force, the Timber Recovery Coordinator, and several of the financing programs expire on June 30, 1993.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Timber Recovery Coordinator, the Agency Timber Task Force, and the Economic Recovery Coordination Board are extended to June 30, 1995. The timber programs in the Public Works Trust Fund and the Community Economic Recovery Board (CERB) also are extended to June 30, 1995. Unemployment benefits for dislocated timber workers are extended to cover workers who become unemployed through July 1, 1995. The benefits can be received until the worker finishes approved training plus five more weeks. An unemployed worker from a plant that closes after November 1, 1992, who did not develop a required training plan due to good cause is allowed additional time to complete the plan.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The period of time an unemployed timber worker may receive unemployment benefits is changed from an additional 52 weeks (total of 104 weeks) to the period of time the person is enrolled in approved training. A provision is added that allows an unemployed worker from a plant that closes after November 1, 1992, who did not develop a required training plans due to good cause, additional time to complete the plan. Language clarifying that persons who received benefits under this program in the past are eligible for additional benefits under this bill is removed. Language allowing cities and counties to use CERB for structures and buildings is removed.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Sections 1-8 are effective June 30, 1993; Section 9 is effective immediately.

Testimony For: The problem is not over for timber communities. The timber team has done a good job at developing cooperative approaches to the problems facing

timber communities. The program for timber workers in the community and technical colleges has been effective. The additional unemployment benefits and infrastructure financing assistance are critical to help dislocated timber workers and communities in the next two years.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: (All support the bill) Representative Bob Basich, prime sponsor; Jan Yoshiwara, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Harriette Buckmann, Clallam County/Timber Counties; Steve Lansing, Lutheran Public Policy Office; Judy Turpin, Washington Environmental Council; Pat Sweeney, Economic Recovery Coordinating Board; and Meg Van Schoorl, Department of Community Development.